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SUBJECT: Bio-Terrorism Tabletop and Bio-Security Initiatives With India

1. Summary: On January 7, 2005, OES/DAS Morin met with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOH) and the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) officials to present US - India Counterterrorism Joint Working Group (CTJWG) on a bio-terrorism tabletop exercise and on strengthening bio-security. Ministry Officials response to these Washington-funded proposals was tepid. Mission will follow-up in mid-February to determine status of the proposals. MEA official also told Morin that India would like to participate in the ITER project. End summary.

Bio-Terrorism Tabletop Exercise: Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)

2. On January 7, 2005, DAS Lee Morin met with Mr. S.K. Swami, Director, Disaster Management Division, Ministry of Home Affairs, to present to Mr. Swami the CTJWG proposal on a bio-terrorism tabletop exercise. The meeting took place in the room that had been set up at the Ministry of Home Affairs as a command center for tsunami relief. DAS Morin managed to engage Mr. Swami's partial attention as aides kept bringing Mr. Swami files for approval. DAS Morin emphasized to Mr. Swami that this proposed bio-terrorism tabletop exercise was funded and only required Government of India approval to get underway. Mr. Swami told DAS Morin that MHA would get back to us.

Strengthening Bio-Security: Ministry of Health (MOH)

3. DAS Morin also met with Mr. Raj Kumar Gadwal, the Under Secretary of the Department of Health, Ministry of Health

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and Family Welfare, to present the proposal for collaborations on "Strengthening Bio-Security." Mr. Gadwal was responsive to the importance of strengthening bio-security. DAS Morin emphasized that funding is available for this activity and that the USG only required GOI approval to begin the collaboration. Gadwal told DAS Morin that such work requires interagency clearance so that India's reply would take some time.

Follow-Up Meeting With Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)

4. DAS Morin met with Meera Shankar, Additional Secretary, UN, Ministry of External Affairs, to discuss the two proposals. While Ms. Shankar well understood that the proposed work would add heft to the CTJWG, she did not evince enthusiasm to push the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Health into engaging in the proposed collaborations.

5. At the end of the meeting, Shankar said that India would be interested in participating in the ITER project even though she came short of suggesting that India should become a member of the consortium.

6. Post will re-engage with the Ministries of Health, Home Affairs and External Affairs to seek a positive response to these proposals.

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